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SOUTH VIETNAM: Ground action is light in most areas but heavy shellings continue in Military Region 1. On 8 November Communist gunners fired over 2,300 artillery and mortar rounds into government positions around Quang Tri City, the heaviest such barrage in over two months. Casualties were light, but the attacks kept government forces pinned down. Elsewhere in Region 1, small skirmishes were fought in some lowland areas and enemy units continued to harass and interdict major highways.

In the southern half of the country, fighting remains at a reduced level, and on 8 November, for the first time since last April, there was no enemy shelling of the An Loc area north of Saigon.

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South Vietnamese officials in the delta apparently are moving ahead with cease-fire planning. According to an assessment by US Embassy officers who recently conferred with some of these officials, government forces are generally in the positions that they are to occupy when a cease-fire is proclaimed and are ready to move on short notice into Viet Cong - controlled villages and hamlets wherever possible. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units have also moved into positions near strategic roads and waterways and are prepared to seize control of remote hamlets on the eve of a cease-fire. Once a cease-fire is in effect, the Communists are expected to make heavy use of such tactics as intimidation, bribery, and assassination to try to extend their control, and the South Vietnamese are making plans to neutralize the Viet Cong infrastructure as it surfaces. The embassy believes that the South Vietnamese may be somewhat reluctant to venture out under cease-fire conditions, when they can no longer rely on massive firepower. Some government troops already are showing some reluctance to enter combat.

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Communist military and political units are having the same problems, and several reports indicate there has been a sharp drop in morale because of the delay in signing a cease-fire agreement.

in coastal Quang Nam Province [redacted] Viet Cong cadre there were ordered on 3 November to attend a four-day political indoctrination course to counter their "loss in confidence" after the 31 October deadline passed with no agreement. [redacted]

[redacted] political cadre and soldiers are becoming disillusioned with their leadership, and are beginning to doubt statements made by higher level cadre.

Similar information has cropped up in the delta; in Dinh Tuong Province, commanders of some units have had to reprimand their troops for talking about laying down their arms and deserting. The Communists seem to be somewhat at a loss to explain to their troops what went wrong with their plans during the past two weeks. The most commonly voiced explanation thus far, that the US "cunningly" broke its commitment regarding the cease-fire date, is not likely to do much to reassure the rank and file.

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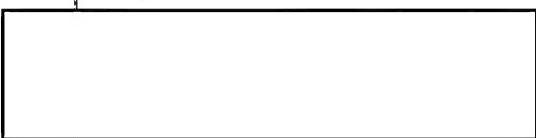
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